First-Time Applicant Handbook

A Land Trust’s Guide to the First-Time Accreditation Process

For land trusts applying in 2020 onward

If you have questions, email info@landtrustaccreditation.org or call 518-587-3143.

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Welcome!
Special places exist in every neighborhood, city and town – the family farm, the urban park, the mountain view. Accredited land trusts are making sure that the places we love today will be loved by generations to come.

Accredited land trusts demonstrate they meet national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust, and ensure that their conservation efforts are permanent. Upon completing a rigorous and detailed application and review process, accredited land trusts receive a license from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission to use the accreditation seal. The accreditation seal is a mark of distinction in land conservation and is a registered trademark.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission was incorporated in April 2006 as non-profit and independent program of the Land Trust Alliance (Alliance) to operate an innovative program to build and recognize strong land trusts, foster public confidence in land conservation and help ensure the long-term protection of land.

The following principles guide the accreditation program.
• Accreditation is voluntary.
• All information provided by applicants is managed in accordance with the Commission's confidentiality policy.
• Accreditation is not a one-time action; it is a tool to foster continuous improvement.
• Accredited organizations are united by strong ethical practices and a commitment to the long-term stewardship of land and conservation easements in the public interest.

In our actions and in our goals for the land trust community, we aspire to the following values.
• **Integrity.** To be clear and honest in our communications with land trusts, the public and others; to build trust in, and respect for, the accreditation program; to respect the confidentiality of data provided to us.
• **Accountability.** To operate an accreditation program that is fair and makes consistent decisions; to learn from and respond to the land conservation community, the public and other stakeholders.
• **Service.** To manage an accreditation program that is efficient and makes productive use of participants’ time; to work cooperatively with land trusts of all types and sizes as they go through the accreditation process.

**Role of the Commission**
The Commission is governed by a board of diverse land conservation and nonprofit management experts from around the country who serve as commissioners. Commissioners volunteer their expertise to verify that a land trust is implementing specific accreditation indicators from *Land Trust Standards and Practices*. The Alliance selects the accreditation indicators and the Commission establishes the requirements used to verify the indicators are met. Commissioners use their breadth of experience with large and small,
staffed and unstaffed land trusts to ensure the requirements are flexible enough to apply to all land trusts.

The Commission follows best practices in accreditation.

- It has a comprehensive conflict of interest policy and manages conflicts to ensure fair and consistent decisions.
- It makes independent decisions that are not influenced by political or donor concerns.
- It maintains a help desk and instructional materials to coach land trusts through the accreditation process and how to document compliance.
- It keeps all applicant material confidential, sharing only aggregate data about challenges facing land trusts to help inform the Alliance’s training and technical assistance program. A confidentiality policy governs how information is shared between the two organizations.

Role of the Alliance
The Alliance is a national conservation organization working to save the places people love by strengthening land conservation across America. The Alliance provides training and technical assistance to help land trusts achieve and maintain accreditation. It elects commissioners to serve on the Commission’s independent board, manages an endowment to keep the program costs low, and provides administrative services to the Commission.

Role of the Public
Public accountability is a key component of the accreditation program; the public is invited to provide information in accordance with the Commission’s “Feedback, Comments and Complaints“ policy.

Before You Begin
In addition to reviewing the instructions in this handbook, land trusts planning and preparing to apply for accreditation must read each of the following documents prior to beginning, and have a copy of each readily available throughout the application process:

- The Requirements Manual (revised periodically), which provides, all in one manual, information on the elements the Commission evaluates for every accreditation indicator and how to document that your land trust is meeting the requirements.
- If applying with related entities, information on each applicable entity is requested as part of the primary applicant’s pre-application in accordance with the Commission’s policy.
- Learn more about requirements for land trusts that accepted land or easements from other organizations, or that engaged in mergers or affiliations.
- Reference copies of the registration, pre-application and application questions and documentation requests. Note: these are provided for your reference only (all responses and supporting documentation are provided via an online application).
**Requirements Manual**

The *Requirements Manual* helps land trusts achieve success in the accreditation process. It serves as a guide for land trusts, providing information on each of the requirements evaluated as part of the accreditation process. The current *Requirements Manual* was released on March 7th, 2018. The requirements are based on indicator elements from *Land Trust Standards and Practices* and the evolving field of land conservation as well as our experience reviewing over 500 applications for land trust accreditation and renewal. The requirements are reviewed annually, and we work closely with the Alliance and the land trust community on each edition. Click here for more information on how the requirements are established.

**First-Time Accreditation Process**

Accredited land trusts say that the process of applying for accreditation can at times seem overwhelming, and yet gratifying once accreditation is achieved (read testimonials here). We strive to make it as easy as possible to explore and understand the process and requirements. Take a look around, and contact us if you still have questions.

Here is an overview of the first-time process.

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**Timeline for First-Time Accreditation**

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1. **Applicant Submits Pre-Application**
   - about 3 months before application due date

2. **Applicant Submits Application and Fee**
   - on or before application due date

3. **Applicant Has Call with Commission Review Team**
   - about 1-4 months after application due date; call agenda sent one week prior

4. **Commission Provides Project Selection and Fee Information**
   - about 2 months before application due date

5. **Commission Reviews the Application Materials**
   - about 1-4 months after application due date

6. **Commission Provides Additional Information Request**
   - about 2-4 weeks after call with review team

7. **Commission Submits Additional Information Request due 1-3 months after follow-up letter received

8. **Commission reviews additional documentation and makes final decision**
   - timing depends on when Commission meets next

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*a Applicant Registers through Lottery Registration in early summer of year preceding application

† Applicant Receives Commission Decision about 10 months after application submitted
Getting Ready
You've done the hard work, and now it is time to receive the recognition! Through the voluntary land trust accreditation program your land trust will grow stronger and can have external verification that it is meeting national quality standards.

Preparation
The land trusts that have achieved accreditation say the process is challenging, but a smart investment. They say that they are stronger and more efficient, have improved the confidence of landowners and funders, gained recognition from their communities, and ensured the long-term success of their organizations.

When your land trust thinks it can demonstrate compliance with the accreditation requirements, test this assumption with a careful review of the Requirements Manual. Read each requirement and the list of required documentation you will be asked to submit. Identify if each document exists, where it is, and if it is of sufficient detail to demonstrate compliance. Most groups who go through this the first time find gaps. The next step is to develop and implement a plan to fill those gaps.

Getting Accreditation Buy-In from Your Board
Need some help talking with your board about why accreditation is a great idea for your land trust? The Alliance has a new information piece with stories from accredited land trusts, in their own words, about how accreditation has transformed and strengthened their organizations. This may be just what you need to inspire your land trust to take the leap and register. View and download today »

Also check out our video featuring accredited land trusts discussing the benefits of accreditation. The video features several land trusts that have successfully navigated the accreditation process and have emerged stronger and more effective as a result. We hope that land trusts across the nation will show the video at their board and staff meetings to start the conversation about accreditation.

- Download the video to take to your next meeting [right-click and select 'Save Link As': Windows Media Player file ]
- View or share the video by visiting our YouTube channel.

Once you’ve watched the video, read our Getting Started fact sheet to help guide your land trust’s journey to accreditation.

The Importance of Accreditation: A Discussion with Volunteer-Led Land Trusts
New to our suite of tools for land trusts considering accreditation: a PowerPoint presentation “The Importance of Accreditation” and companion script. This downloadable presentation is intended for use by board members of volunteer-led land trusts to generate interest in and support of pursuing accreditation (or renewal) while recognizing the unique challenges that
volunteer-led land trusts face. Much of the content is based on conversations with several volunteer-led land trusts that have successfully completed the process.

**Eligibility and Requirements**

To know when accreditation might be right for your land trust it helps to understand the basic accreditation requirements for each step.

**Registration eligibility requirements:**

Accreditation is available to all U.S.-based 501(c) (3) tax-exempt public charities and quasi-governmental organizations that:

- actively acquire and/or steward conservation land or conservation easements,
- have been incorporated (or formed as a trust) for at least two years, and
- have completed at least two direct land or easement acquisition projects. *In a direct land or easement acquisition project the applicant organization was included in the chain of title on a fee parcel or was the grantee of a conservation easement.*

**Pre-Application Requirements:**

- A complete pre-application and all required attachments.
- In addition, pre-applicant must demonstrate the following at the time of pre-application:
  - That each conservation easement has a baseline documentation report.
  - That each conservation easement has been inspected annually for three calendar years.
  - That each fee property has a management plan or management summary.
  - That each fee property has been inspected annually.

The *Requirements Manual* describes how a land trust can demonstrate that it meets these pre-application requirements.

**Application Requirements:**

- A complete application questionnaire.
- Evidence that the applicant is meeting each of the accreditation indicators by including:
  - All required attachments, and
  - All required project documentation.

The *Requirements Manual* describes how a land trust can demonstrate that it meets each indicator.

Wherever your land trust is on its journey, we wish you success. Please contact us if you have questions about the accreditation program.

**Special Message for Mitigation Land Trusts**

It is sometimes challenging for an organization that relies exclusively on mitigation fees to be classified as a public charity by the Internal Revenue Service. *If an organization does not have sufficient public support to be classified as a public charity, it is not eligible for accreditation.* Please review the IRS instructions regarding the public support calculation.
before you submit your registration. While a mitigation land trust's Form 990 may indicate that all of its income counts towards “public support” you can expect your application review team will have questions about how the organization meets the public support test. It is likely you will be required to retain an independent certified public accountant that specializes in tax-exempt accounting to closely examine the organization’s sources of income and recalculate its public support as part of the review process.

**Registration**
Application slots for first-time accreditation are filled via lottery, which is conducted based on the number of application slots available and the number of land trusts that complete the lottery registration form. The registration form is brief, and focuses on eligibility requirements, organization contact information, Registration Terms of Agreement, and payment information. For more information, see the current [lottery registration fact sheet](#).

**Expressing Informal Intent for Future Years**
Organizations that would like to express their intent to register for a future year may do so by completing a [short online survey](#). Each organization that completes this survey will receive a written confirmation of its intent to register that it can share with interested parties as desired; it will also be assisting the Commission in allocating appropriate resources. Of course, completion of this survey is not required in order for your organization to register; in addition, until your organization completes the lottery registration process it is not formally entered into the lottery. This letter-of-intent form does not represent a commitment on behalf of your organization or the Commission.

**Pre-Application and Attachments**
You are welcome to begin working on your online pre-application as soon as it is unlocked; you will receive an email notice that it is unlocked about three months in advance of the pre-application due date. Note that regardless of when you begin working on your pre-application, the information in your responses must be no older than 90 days prior to submission, so plan to review your responses and attachments prior to submitting your pre-application to ensure it includes the most up-to-date information. For instance, policies adopted years ago but that are still in effect can be uploaded any time. But, the Land Conservation Project List data, the Schedule of Dedicated and Restricted Funds data, and any summaries of conflicts, amendments, violations, etc. should be current (i.e. within 90 days of the pre-application due date).

Each potential applicant for first-time accreditation is required to submit a complete pre-application questionnaire with all required attachments. [The pre-application materials enable the Commission to confirm that land trusts meet basic program requirements before they are invited to submit a complete application](#). If invited, data from the pre-application is used by the Commission to select projects for which the applicant will need to submit detailed documentation with its application. The pre-application is due approximately 12 weeks before the complete application is due.
Details on how to submit a pre-application using the online system are located in the online application system. *Click here for information about penalties for failure to meet required due dates.*

**Tip:** If applying with related entities, information on each applicable entity is requested as part of the primary applicant’s pre-application in accordance with the Commission’s policy.

**Tip:** Learn more about requirements for land trusts that accepted land or easements from other organizations, or that engaged in mergers or affiliations.

**Land Conservation Project List**
A completed Land Conservation Project List (LCPL; Excel file) must be included for all conservation easements and conservation fee properties held by your organization, and must be submitted with all pre-applications.

Download the LCPL Template and Instructions
Watch the LCPL Video Tutorial

**TIP:** Applicants **must list all** conservation fee properties and conservation easements held at the time of pre-application.

**TIP:** The LCPL data provided must be no older than three months prior to the pre-application due date.

**TIP:** If your land trust maintains its own database, it may be more convenient for you to download the data from your database and use that as the foundation for your LCPL information. In that instance, you can bypass using the Commission’s LCPL template; however, you must ensure that your data is presented in an Excel spreadsheet and contains the same columns as indicated on the Commission’s LCPL template.

**Schedule of Dedicated and Restricted Funds**
A completed Schedule of Dedicated and Restricted Funds (“SDRF”; Excel file) must be submitted with each pre-application.

Download the SDRF Template and Instructions
Watch the SDRF Video Tutorial

**TIP:** SDRF data must be no older than three months prior to the pre-application due date. *Compare the SDRF with your most recent external evaluation for consistency in reporting.*

**TIP:** You do NOT need to report on funds for specific projects for acquisition, special projects such as internships, etc. that are not related to stewardship, defense or land management.
Public Notice

Download template public notice form

As part of a complete application, applicants are required to provide evidence that they have notified key stakeholders that the organization is applying for accreditation or renewal. Most organizations complete their public notice around the time they submit their pre-application; they must complete public notice in time to submit evidence as part of the application.

The notice to stakeholders must include information on how interested parties can comment, when comments are due and the requirement that comments must relate to Land Trust Standards and Practices. For your convenience we have provided a template public notice form that your organization can use to announce its application for accreditation and the opportunity for the public to submit comments. You may edit the language, but the key components – how to comment, that comments must relate to national quality standards, and a target due date – must be included.

Some specific public notice options your land trust might consider:

- Newsletter: If you run an article in your newsletter, send us a copy of the newsletter along with general information on the size and type of list it was sent to, not the actual list (for example, “sent to 750 dues-paying members and local town council members”).
- Targeted letter to knowledgeable colleagues: If you send a more targeted letter to a small group of stakeholders, we would like to see a copy of the letter and the list of names and/or affiliations of the people it was sent to.
- Press releases or letters to the editor: You may also consider sending a press release or letter to the editor to local or regional newspapers. You may send us a copy of the release and a list of newspapers it was sent to.
- Website: Many organizations have posted information on how to submit a public comment on their websites. You may simply indicate in a cover note to us that information was posted on your website and how you let people know it was posted.

Your land trust may choose to implement one or more of the outreach methods listed (or other methods not listed). We will review the notice materials to determine that the applicant made a reasonable effort to inform stakeholders about their application for accreditation.

Commission Pre-Application Review

The Commission reviews each pre-application for first-time accreditation with respect to the pre-application requirements (this review is not predictive of future success in the application process). The pre-application materials are used by the Commission to:

- confirm that a land trust meets specific program requirements before it is allowed to proceed and submit a complete application
- select projects and verification items for which the land trust will need to submit detailed documentation, if invited to submit an application.
• evaluates whether the land trust meets the funding requirements for easement stewardship and defense and/or for fee land management (as described in the Requirements Manual), and if more action is needed.

Pre-Application Acceptance and Project Documentation Request
Land trusts are notified about eight weeks before the application due date whether their pre-application was accepted and will at that time receive a list of projects for which the Commission will need to see documentation (see more below). An invoice for the balance of the accreditation fee will also be sent at this time; fees are due at the same time as the application. Read more about how fees are assessed.

The Commission may determine that a land trust's pre-application cannot be accepted if:
• the land trust does not meet the eligibility and registration requirements;
• the land trust does not meet the pre-application requirements;
• the land trust is unable to demonstrate that it meets the public support test (see p. 7);
• the land trust is not primarily engaged in the active acquisition or stewardship of conservation land or conservation easements;
• the land trust would not be able to document compliance with the indicators and/or is not a strong candidate for accreditation;
• the pre-application documents are in unacceptable condition; and/or
• the pre-application is not otherwise able to be processed effectively.

If the Commission determines that a pre-application cannot be accepted, the organization will need to re-register when it is ready to apply. The registration fee is nonrefundable and nontransferable.

The Commission selects projects and targeted verification documents for inclusion in the main application based on the information submitted in the pre-application. See more in the Application Questionnaire and Documentation Section below.

Application Questionnaire and Documentation
Download reference application materials
You are welcome to begin working on your online application as soon as it is unlocked; you will receive an email notice that it is unlocked at least 6 months in advance of the application due date. However, we require that the responses in your application be no older than 90 days prior to submission so plan to review your responses and attachments prior to submitting your application to ensure it includes the most up-to-date information.

All material submitted to the Commission must be submitted electronically using the online application system. Make sure to plan ahead to ensure that your land trust has all the information needed to ensure the application can be submitted electronically by the application due date.
TIP: Previous applicants found it helpful to review the application questionnaire and list of attachments in advance of logging onto the system. Click here for a reference copy of the application questionnaire and required documents.

TIP: The application fee is also due on the application due date. It is invoiced separately. See the current accreditation fee schedule for details.

Application Questionnaire
Your responses to the application questionnaire determine the list of supporting documentation that will be required from your organization. Accreditation involves a mix of required documents and sampled documents to confirm that the land trust is following Land Trust Standards and Practices and meets the accreditation requirements. Some documents are required from all applicants (such as policies); some documents are required depending on a land trust’s application responses (see example, below); and some documents are sampled as requested by the Commission (such as a documentation related to management of a recent conflict, or project documentation).

Application Documentation
The application requires written statements as attachments, generally for detailed narrative responses. You may have written materials (such as policies, procedures, checklists, etc.) that answer the question; these may be included in support of your statement. If the written materials fully describe your response, you can provide those in lieu of a separate statement.

How Detailed an Answer?
Your statements and answers to the questions in the application should be clear and candid. You should do what you can to help a reader who does not know about your organization understand the work you are doing. Do not be concerned about getting the “right” answer. The Commission recognizes that there is a diversity of approaches in how each land trust implements the accreditation indicators. The key is that they are being implemented and you can show us how it is done in your land trust.

Changed Practices
A land trust may have substantially changed its practices in the last few years. If this is the case, you may want to note when substantial changes were made so that reviewers can understand differences between application answers and project documentation. It helps to be candid; if you have past projects that would not be done the same way today, explain what would be different.

New Policies
If your organization recently adopted new policies, your application must include evidence that the policies are being implemented. You may either provide documentation that your practices were in place before being formalized in a policy or show documentation of how the new policy is implemented.
Project and Targeted Verification Documentation

Complete Project Documentation
The Commission selects specific conservation easements or fee properties listed on the Land Conservation Project List provided in your pre-application. Your land trust then provides a complete set of documentation for that project. The number of complete projects selected depends on how many projects in each category – conservation easements or fee properties – your organization holds at time of pre-application. We will cap the number of projects we select at six, unless there is an extraordinary circumstance, and select the number of projects as follows. For each category of holding (conservation easement and/or fee ownership):

- 1–25 holdings = up to 2 project files in this category
- 26–50 holdings = up to 3 project files in this category
- 51–100 holdings = up to 4 project files in this category
- 101–200 holdings = up to 5 project files in this category
- >200 holdings = number determined on a case-by-case basis

The Commission has created a project documentation list that contains the potentially-required documentation for any type of conservation project (easement, fee, purchase, donation, mitigation, etc.). This list can be found online (see “Targeted Verification Item Checklists”). To compile your project documentation, review the list and identify the documents on the checklist that you have for the project selected by the Commission. Once you have identified the list of documents that are available for the project, compile the documentation and upload them to the online application system as prompted.

Targeted Verification Documentation
Targeted verification includes a narrow set of documents to show how the land trust met the requirements in a specific area. Based on your land trust’s pre-application answers and documentation, the Commission may request specific documents be uploaded for transactions or activities identified as being higher risk (i.e., a routine conservation easement amendment to add acreage would not be selected for additional documentation, but an amendment to add a building envelope likely would). The list of documents that could be requested for each type of targeted verification item can be found online (see “Targeted Verification Item Checklists”).

Review Process
A review team of one or more commissioners and a Commission staff member reviews each complete accreditation application in detail. The majority of the information evaluated by the review team is from the applicant; additional information may be provided by the public and still other information may be the result of research conducted by the Commission’s review team. This additional information may relate to the review of more than one accreditation indicator. Relying on multiple sources of information helps ensure credible decisions that maintain the integrity of the accreditation program.

Commission Research
The review team may conduct research regarding an applicant. This research may include Web or print searches, documented interviews with individuals knowledgeable about the land
trust’s activities, informal visits to conservation properties and/or review of other data. The Commission is well aware that not all news accounts, websites or other reports are accurate or complete, thus affirmative disclosure and explanation of publicly-known issues will assist the Commission in its work.

**Application Review**
The review team examines all of the information it has to determine if the applicant is implementing *Land Trust Standards and Practices* and meeting the accreditation requirements. The review team not only examines an applicant’s written policies (for example, a conflict of interest policy), but also looks for evidence that the policy and accreditation indicators are actually followed (such as by reviewing board meeting minutes from the last time the applicant managed a conflict of interest).

The review team may find the applicant is meeting each accreditation indicator, or it may find that it needs more information and/or that the applicant needs to take corrective action to be in compliance.

- **In making its findings, the review team keeps flexibility in mind.** We are aware that one size does not fit all in land conservation and that there is a wide diversity of approaches that land trusts use to implement the standards. For example, an all-volunteer organization with a board that meets monthly and discusses each project in detail will have different evidence of board review of projects than a staffed organization with an active land committee. Each organization will need to provide evidence of project review, but the Commission expects their approaches to be very different. Commissioners reflect the diversity of the land trust community and use their extensive knowledge to help ensure that applicants are meeting the accreditation indicators and that the review is flexible and practical.

- **The Commission uses a variety of systems to ensure consistency** in the review process including having staff and commissioners serve on a variety of review teams, using the *Requirements Manual* as a reference, and having feedback systems between staff, commissioners, Commission committees and the full Commission. For more information see the *Saving Land* article, “Collaboration and Consistency: Ensuring Fairness in the Accreditation Process” and the Commission’s “Consistency Checks” diagram.

**Applicant Conference Call**
The review team will hold one phone call with the applicant to give the applicant an opportunity to answer questions the review team may have about the application. *Read about the applicant call, from a land trust's perspective.*

While the review team may have questions related to a particular practice, it does not necessarily mean that the applicant needs to provide additional information or take further action! In many cases, only verbal clarification of information submitted is needed.

*TIP: This call will be scheduled in advance at a date and time that works for all parties.*

*TIP: Applicants will receive a detailed call agenda approximately one week prior to the scheduled call detailing the questions the review team would like to discuss.*
**TIP:** Once the call is scheduled, the applicant may want to block some time prior to the scheduled date to review the call agenda and assign the appropriate people to join the call and respond to specific questions. Participation from board members and staff (if any) is strongly encouraged and appreciated.

**Site Visit:** The Commission reserves the right to use site visits as a check on the document-based process and to verify organizational practices or land conservation work on the ground. *No site visits are planned at this time.*

**Additional Information Request**
If the review team still needs additional information from an applicant or the applicant must take corrective action before a final decision can be made on the application, the applicant will receive an additional information request (AIR) explaining the additional information/action needed. If applying with related entities, any additional information requests for the related entities will be included in the one Additional Information Request described above. Applicants will generally be provided with one to three months to respond to the AIR.

The elapsed time between the application due date and receiving a formal “Additional Information Request” letter from the Commission can range from 6 weeks to four months. Reviews take place according to an internal schedule developed after all applications have been submitted for a round; the location of your land trust in that docket determines when the review takes place and when the AIR is sent. We will give you a specific timeline once our review of your application has begun. If you need to know sooner, please contact the Commission.

**Commission Decision**
The Commission makes final decisions on each complete application based on the review team’s evaluation of the applicant’s compliance, during its accredited term, with *Land Trust Standards and Practices* and published program requirements.

The Commission can make one of the following three decisions at the conclusion of the first-time application process: award accreditation, table accreditation, or not award accreditation. For more information about each of these, click here.

A land trust may appeal a Commission decision to not award accreditation by following the Commission’s *Appeals Policy and Procedures*.

**Accreditation Fees**
Accreditation fees are structured to provide land trusts of all sizes the opportunity to participate in accreditation and to support a program that builds strong land trusts, fosters public trust in land conservation and helps ensure the permanence of land conservation. The accreditation fee consists of a registration fee and an application fee. Each year’s fee schedule is typically announced in the spring of the year prior. Click here for the current accreditation fee schedule.
Accreditation fees cover much of the costs related to accreditation, including your land trust’s review. A review team of land conservation professionals evaluates your application and provides an information request detailing where information or improvement is needed for your land trust to be successful in the accreditation process. Click here for list of many accreditation benefits.

Where to Go for Help
Commission Materials
- Requirements Manual
- The “Help and Resources” section of the Commission website
- Advice from land trusts that have achieved accreditation

Land Trust Alliance Resources
Training
The Land Trust Alliance has developed an affordable curriculum related to Land Trust Standards and Practices with special focus on the accreditation indicators. Study can be done online, in person, or with a consultant. Find out more.
The Alliance also offers workshops, seminars, and courses through the Land Conservation Leadership Program, Rally: The National Land Conservation Conference, and Regional Conferences. See the Alliance’s website for more details.

The Learning Center
This is the place to go if you want to hone your conservation skills and grow your organization to its full potential. And it’s a valuable part of your Land Trust Alliance membership. At the Learning Center, you can:
- Review the accreditation indicator elements and narratives
- Learn all the essentials for land conservation
- Take courses on Land Trust Standards and Practices or prepare for accreditation
- “Ask The Experts” in moderated forums
- Access reference materials in the conservation library
The Learning Center also contains presentations from conferences, as well as numerous other documents, publications, worksheets, and more. Visit the Learning Center.

Saving Land Magazine
The Alliance’s magazine, entitled Saving Land, is the nation’s leading land conservation magazine. Available as a member benefit when you join the Land Trust Alliance, the quarterly magazine offers in-depth stories on the latest land conservation issues, innovations and trends. The magazine also features columns on accreditation, fundraising, board tips, profiles of conservation leaders, resources and timely news, to help you save land even better. From the technical to the inspirational, Saving Land magazine presents not just the “how” of what we do, but also the “why.”
**Publications**
The Alliance offers an extensive selection of publications for land trust practitioners. A sample of the selection offered is below:

- *Appraising Easements*
- *The Conservation Easement Handbook*
- *Doing Deals*
- *Federal Tax Law*
- *Land Trust Standards and Practices*

See the complete catalog.

**State Service Centers**
Land trust service centers - also known as councils, service bureaus, coalitions, alliances, and compacts - work closely with the Land Trust Alliance and land trusts to deliver services and technical assistance that strengthen local and regional organizations that conserve open space. Visit [www.landtrustalliance.org/state-associations](http://www.landtrustalliance.org/state-associations) to find a service center in your region.

**Maintaining Accreditation**
Here are a few steps to help your land trust maintain its accreditation and prepare for renewal.

- Implement any Expectations for Improvement.
- Annually review the *Requirements Manual*.
- Keep track of any unique set of facts and circumstances that resulted in not meeting one of the accreditation indicators or accreditation requirements throughout the accredited term.
- Contact the Commission’s Help Desk if you have questions.

**Continuous Improvement**
The accreditation program was designed to foster continuous improvement. Accredited organizations are expected to implement *Land Trust Standards and Practices*. Accredited organizations are also expected to stay current in the field of land conservation, to review annual updates to the *Requirements Manual* and to continually refine their programs.

**Conditions for Maintaining Accreditation**
Land trusts applying for accreditation or renewal sign a formal Accreditation Agreement accepting conditions for maintaining accreditation, including the following.

- To comply with the accreditation indicators and program requirements.
- To implement *Land Trust Standards and Practices*, to be aware of any changes to them, to stay current in the field of land conservation.
- To provide the Commission with information, upon request, regarding your organization’s compliance with the accreditation indicators and program requirements.
- To notify the Commission in writing of major changes in your structure or operation that could potentially affect your organization’s intent and ability to comply with the accreditation indicators or accreditation requirements.
Notification
A land trust must notify the Commission in writing of any major change in its structure or operation that could potentially affect its intent and ability to comply with Land Trust Standards and Practices and accreditation requirements. Changes that require written notification include the following:

- Change of scope of activities (such as when an organization that only accepted fee properties at the time of accreditation takes on conservation easements, or when an accredited land trust that had not completed any new transactions during its accredited term completes a new transaction after having been awarded renewal).
- Transformation of governance structure (such as mergers, changes in a parent organization, etc.).
- Significant changes in mission (such as taking on activities that are counter to land conservation or eliminating the organization’s land conservation program).
- Legal actions taken against the land trust or settlement of actions pending at the time of accreditation.
- Change of tax-exempt or charitable status.
- Other changes that may result in the land trust’s no longer implementing Land Trust Standards and Practices and accreditation requirements.

Other changes that may trigger the need to inform the Commission would include circumstances such as expanding the land trust’s service region from a small area to a much larger area, completing a series of transactions during the accredited term (either easement or fee) when the land trust had not completed a recent transaction for evaluation prior to being awarded accreditation, or otherwise substantially expanding the scope of the organization. Finally, accredited land trusts must notify the Commission of any changes to the land trust’s contact information, particularly the accreditation contact information.

Confirming Compliance
The Commission can request additional information from an accredited land trust during its accreditation term to confirm compliance with Land Trust Standards and Practices and accreditation requirements. The ability to confirm compliance enables the Commission to assure the public that all accredited land trusts meet the accreditation requirements. For more information see the Commission’s Compliance Confirmation Policy and Procedures.

Disciplinary Action
While extremely rare, an accredited land trust can be placed on probation and accreditation can be revoked according to the Commission’s Disciplinary Action Policy and Procedures. This policy helps maintain the integrity of the accreditation program for all participants.